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Rennie, C. G. Colleton

Reform considered in connection with the...

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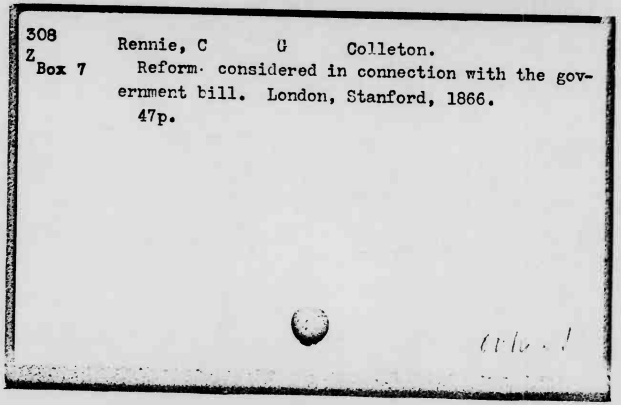

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REFORM:

CONSIDERED IN CONNECTION

WITH

THE GOVERNMENT BILL.

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Box 7

BY

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LONDON:

EDWARD STANFORD, 6, CHARING CROSS.

1866.

3 Sept 1915 E&E

REFORM:

CONSIDERED IN CONNECTION

WITH

THE GOVERNMENT BILL.

In a crisis like the present, when the best and most skilful Constitution the world has ever seen is being wantonly assailed—when a revolution, and a revolution without a cause, is not only contemplated, but being carried into effect—it is the duty of all, however humble, however feeble, to raise their voices, and to unite their efforts in resisting the most uncalled for and the most dangerous experiment of modern times. Those who in silence and obscurity patiently attend to the working of the Constitution, who are conversant with the delicate and complicated machinery by which it moves; who for this reason have investigated, however imperfectly, the still more delicate and almost impalpable forms of our social life, who have explored its hidden recesses, and perceive, however dimly, the whole of the organization by which the country lives and moves and has its being, though they attain none of the fame of the political philosopher, who elaborates abstract metaphysical doctrines in his closet, or of the almost equally speculative legislator who promulgates visionary schemes and impulsive legislation, yet they may, perhaps, claim a hearing on the ground of a practical knowledge of the subject on which they treat.

In the ensuing pages I shall avoid all party controversy,

for this question rises beyond the regions of party conflict; it is a question regarding the infinitely higher destinies of the country itself, for whose welfare all parties were created, and to which they are all subservient. I shall not dwell on the obvious fact of its being framed at the dictation, and to suit the views of, a small section of the community; I shall not refer to the extraordinary mode of its introduction or to its equally extraordinary progress; I shall not even complain of the party, the *partisan*, Redistribution of Seats, and shall merely examine the Bill itself in its bearings on the welfare and destinies of the country.

In the first place, is there any need of Reform at all?

Those who assert this must prove one of four propositions:—

1. That there is an immediate pressure so great as to compel acquiescence in a measure however bad. The argument from irresistible necessity.

This no one has ventured to assert.

2. That the present system works badly.

This, too, no one has ever had the hardihood to advance.

3. That serious evils may hereafter arise from a refusal at present to enlarge the franchise.

Revolutions have happened through tyranny, through the madness or impulse of the moment, through the imbecility of the governing classes, whether in an oligarchy or a democracy; but we may search the pages of history, and among the infinite variety of causes, external or internal, which have in their time produced a revolution, we shall look in vain for a portion of a people deliberately rebelling in order to secure a 6*l.* instead of a 10*l.* franchise.

4. That under the present system some classes are insufficiently represented.

This would, if it were true, be a manifest injustice; and though it might never produce any harm either to the classes who suffer by it or to the nation at large, yet there would always be the danger of an "ugly rush," to use

the celebrated phrase of Mr. Henley—a danger, too, which might supervene from numerous causes entirely unconnected with the insufficiency of the representation, and perhaps not directly connected even with the country itself. In spite of what is usually said, I believe the nation at large was satisfied with the representation as it existed before the Reform Bill; but there were two defects: the great unrepresented towns, and the small number of electors as compared with the population even in many of the represented boroughs; the break-up of the old Tory party and the necessities of the Whigs introduced a Reform Bill, at the same time the revolutionary ferment of the Continent was partly communicated to this country, and the result was an "ugly rush," which very narrowly missed being much "uglier."

But are not all classes properly represented at present. To come to a right conclusion, we must examine them according to both numbers and wealth. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his famous speech at Liverpool, described the income of the working and all other classes together, at 250,000,000*l.* and 350,000,000*l.* respectively, while he stated that they had only one-fourth of the voting power in the Boroughs, and none, or next to none, in the Counties; so that with a vast preponderance in numbers, and with wealth equal to two-thirds that of the other classes, they had only one-sixth of the representation.

But as the Chancellor of the Exchequer is more remarkable for the recklessness than the accuracy of his calculations, I prefer the authority of the ablest living statistician, Professor Leoni Levi, who estimates the respective incomes of the working and other classes at 144,000,000*l.* and 450,000,000*l.*, or one-fourth to three-fourths, in exact proportion to their share in the Borough representation. But I hope presently to offer convincing proofs that in his estimate of the share possessed by the working men in the County franchise, the Chancellor of the Exchequer was equally wrong as when he made the famous

declaration, with the confidence of one asserting a known, proved, and admitted fact, "That the working men did not possess more than one-twentieth, certainly not one-tenth of the voting power in the Boroughs." That is, their voting power is in exact proportion to their tax-paying power. But their voting power is in excess of their proportionate share of rents. Mr. Baxter shows that, in the Boroughs, the total working class rental of all houses is 7,340,000*l.* per annum as against 33,728,000*l.* paid by the other classes; they have, therefore, considering those who have the franchise to represent those who have not, one-fourth of the voting power as against less than one-fifth of the rental, and the incomes of the two parties, 202,000,000*l.* to 44,000,000*l.*, are in the same proportion. In the Counties the disproportion would, in all probability, be much more marked.

What are their numbers? Professor Levi estimates the total number of working classes in the United Kingdom at 18,000,000, without including those dependent on parochial relief, the criminal classes, &c. Of these about 12,000,000 are in England as against 7,000,000 of the other classes, and, estimating them by heads of families, there are 22,000,000 working men as against 1,200,000 of the middle and upper classes. If we take the aggregate of working class votes, both in Boroughs and Counties, at 300,000, which I believe will ultimately be found not above the mark, and the total number of electors at 1,000,000, we shall find that the upper and middle classes will have 700,000 votes, or 50 per cent., while the working class heads of families will have 300,000, or 12½ per cent. But this body of working men includes the agricultural labourers, who are never reckoned with the working class proper, or artisans, but who are invariably classed with the landed interest. Turn them over to the "other classes," and they cannot number less than 600,000 heads of families, and we have only 1,800,000 working men against 2,000,000 of the other classes; so that 33½

per cent. of the upper, middle, and agricultural classes have votes as against 17 per cent. of the others, no real disproportion, when income, education, and all other elements are taken into consideration.

The House of Commons is a representation of a representation. It is a double representation, far more skilfully planned than that invented by the French Revolutionists, and now in force in Prussia, *i.e.* the plan of having primary and secondary electors, the first of whom elect the second, and the second the Chamber. The Commons are a representative body, they represent the great mass of the people, consequently their numbers have always been comparatively small. They are an *Estate*, not the mass of the people. In the experience of centuries it has been found that the Estate of the Commons, as fixed by a tenure and occupation franchise, is the most equitable representation of all classes of the community, and is subject to the fewest practical objections; and I venture to think that, on further examination, it will still be found superior to any new scheme, however ingenious or however well supported by plausible arguments.

In spite of the large number of the middle classes who, from neglect, non-payment of rates, insufficient residence, or residence which, according to the Constitution, does not give the franchise at a less rental than 50*l.* in counties or lodgings in boroughs, these classes are adequately represented in the Estate of the Commons. Is this also the case with working men? If by working men are meant skilled artisans, and if, as I contend, 300,000 are now on the Register, both in boroughs and counties, even supposing that the greater number of those resident in the counties are not strictly artisans, but only those who inhabit freeholds near the large towns, yet we shall still find that their number cannot be less than 200,000. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, towards the end of his speech on the first reading, gave their total numbers at 880,000, so that the Commons would include 25 per cent. of their number as

against 33½ per cent. of the middle and agricultural classes, an equal or more than equal proportion when the difference in income and rental is taken into consideration. If by working men is meant merely those masses who have not now the suffrage, I reply, that to admit anything like a proportionate number would, especially in a country of large towns, admit democracy in its worst, most powerful, and most formidable aspect. But even if these men are included in the term working class, their representatives amount to 17 per cent. of their numbers, a sufficient proportion, and this 17 per cent. is the "*élite*" of which so much has been said. Great stress has been laid upon the supposed incorruptibility of working men, and it is asserted that to admit a large number of them would purify the constituencies by swamping the corrupt portion of the 10*l.* Householders, and instances have been given of the supposed immaculate virtue of the artisan. This is mere declamation; it will not bear a moment's examination. What *primâ facie* reason can be given why a man living in a 7*l.* house should be less accessible to corruption than one who lives in a 10*l.* house. Is not the *primâ facie* argument exactly the reverse, that the man in a 7*l.* house must be poorer and therefore more necessitous, more open to bribes, than he who lives in a 10*l.* house. Again, what mysterious virtue is inherent in the fact of receiving your income by weekly instalments, paid every Saturday night, that persons so living should be deemed absolutely inaccessible to corruption, while those who make their money by daily profit over a counter are constantly denounced as the most corruptible of mankind. Indeed, so far has this gone that even those *bonâ fide* artisans who are so unfortunate as to keep a small shop, even though that shop be ever so slight a supplement to their main earnings, are denied the sacred character of working men, as if the fact of receiving weekly wages were a pure and holy thing, which the slightest contact with the ordinary means of living was sufficient to contaminate. Lastly, why should a working man *not* a freeman be purity itself, while

a working man who *is* a freeman is generally held to be as nearly as possible its opposite.

The answer to all this is obvious. Corruption does not arise from the peculiar composition of any constituency, or from the habits of any one class of men, but from the peculiar position in which that constituency or that class happens to be placed. I can point to many great boroughs, and some perhaps in which freemen do not most abound, whose corruption is notorious—I can point to many small boroughs which are pure—to many, both large and small, which have been pure but which are fast becoming corrupt—to many others which have become or are fast becoming pure. Why? Corruption, the degradation of man, like the degradation of woman, is not arrived at all at once. It spreads gradually from small beginnings until at last it overspreads the whole body politic like a consuming ulcer, and men do without shame the very thing, the bare suspicion of which they would formerly have resented as the bitterest insult. It arises where parties are pretty evenly balanced, where money will have weight, and where there are persons willing and able to spend it. It ceases where the supremacy of one party becomes so marked as to render its employment hopeless for the one and superfluous for the other. This is why many of the great boroughs enfranchised by the Reform Bill, and all the Scotch burghs, are so pure and the working constituency so immaculate; they have always been in the hands of one party. The reason why the boroughs containing freemen are so corrupt, is not because a poor man is corrupt because he is a freeman, which is absurd, but because the old contests between equally balanced parties had tainted them, and that after the Reform Bill there was still sufficient vitality in either party to continue the struggle, and thus keep alive the corruption. Corruption, like any other vice which afflicts a nation, rises and falls, it has its degrees and local peculiarities, and it is by no means confined to small boroughs.

It has been asserted, indeed, that it is impossible to

bribe a large borough, but the laws of supply and demand govern votes like any other commodity. I remember a great borough where—the election took place in July—three votes were to be obtained for one pot of beer. Now if there be degrees in corruption, I believe that it is more disgraceful for a poor man to sell himself for 1*d.* than for 100*l.*

It may, however, be asserted that the educated artisans in the manufacturing districts are so pure and so determined in upholding their rights, that nothing can make them swerve. I reply, that in this case it is probable that their devotion to class interests, not to say trade-unions, is so great as to overcome all the ordinary temptations by which men in their position are usually swayed. The fact would be honourable indeed to the class, but I think it would be found that even corruption would be less dangerous to the State.

Another argument in favour of Reform, and one much insisted on, is that whereas the population has increased 79 per cent., the number of electors has increased only 82 per cent., and it is urged that the vast increase of wealth and intelligence among the working classes entitles them to a more extended suffrage, and to a more elastic franchise, so that all who are morally qualified may avail themselves of it.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his speech on the first reading, said: "The representation of the working classes has not advanced. I calculate that in 1832, 54 per cent. of freemen, or 34,000, and 60 per cent. of scot and lot voters, or 27,000, were working men = 61,000," out of a total of 63,000 freemen and 44,000 scot and lot voters. He also calculates that out of the 174,000 10*l.* householders existing in 1832, there were 26,000 working men, so that there were 61,000 and 26,000 = 87,000 working men out of a constituency of 332,000, or 32 per cent. of the whole; whereas now there are only 128,000, or 26 per cent., 20,000 old-right, and 108,000 10*l.*'s.

But taking his own figures, if, now that there are 51,000 freemen and scot and lot voters, only 20,000 are working men, in 1832 there could not have been more than 42,000, which will reduce the total constituency of working men at that date to 68,000, or about 20 per cent. Nor have we any reason given us for placing the working men 10*l.* householders in 1832 at 26,000.

Passing on, we find that the present state of things is transitory, owing to the gradual decrease of the old-right voters. But it is not the temporary, but the permament and ultimate character of the constituencies we have to consider, and a glance at the 10*l.* householders will show how rapidly the working men are attaining the franchise, even at its present level.

The 10*l.* householders have increased from 174,179 to 458,985, or rather more than 2½ times, but the working-men 10*l.*'s have increased from 26,000 to 108,000, or rather more than four times; so that the working-men are gaining on the other classes by nearly 2 to 1, and yet now, at a time when rents are everywhere rising, and wages, to enable men to pay the rent, are increasing, we are told that it is necessary to lower the franchise from 10*l.* to 7*l.*, simultaneously with the rise in the rental of the 7*l.* houses to 10*l.*

It is true that the actual number of voters has only increased 82 per cent. as against 79 per cent., the rate of increase of the population; but this does not refute the argument which asserts the rapid attainment of the franchise by the working classes. On the contrary, it tells the other way; it shows that the middle classes are apathetic on the subject of votes, as is well known to be the case in the largest boroughs, where the increase of population has been most marked, and this I hope to prove further on. If all the 10*l.* householders, voters or not, in 1832 were compared with the same body in 1866, we should have a very different result. As it is, however, the 10*l.* voters have increased 102 per cent., or from 174,000 to 407,000,

while in some boroughs, and those great centres of trade, the increase, in spite of the neglect of many to register, has been very marked. In Manchester the population has increased 82, the voters 225 per cent. In Salford the population has doubled, the voters trebled. In Birmingham the population has increased 105, voters 170 per cent. Southampton, population 143, constituency 194. Sheffield, population 102, voters 154. Portsmouth, population 88, constituency, 232. Lambeth, population 91, voters 402.

Lastly, in the years following the passing of the Reform Act, it is well known that large numbers were placed on the Register who were not entitled to it; and hence, in 1832, the true number of 10*l.* householders was probably considerably less than 174,000, and, consequently, the increase has been proportionably greater.

Lastly, comes the rise and progress of the Benefit Building Societies. This movement is so extensive and so important, not only in its political but in its social bearings, that I may be excused from referring to it at some length; more especially as I have scarcely seen their influence adverted to in any of the debates or pamphlets which have appeared on the present Reform Bill.

Building Societies on a small scale, and conducted on various principles, have been in existence during the greatest part of the present century. The Act 6 & 7 W. IV. c. 32, was the first step taken towards placing these societies on the present footing; but though many were enrolled under it, especially at Birmingham, but little real progress was made until 1847, when Mr. J. Taylor, of Birmingham, founded a Freehold Land Society in that town for a political object. The success of this society was very marked, and other societies in connection with it rapidly sprang up in the surrounding districts. At the end of its first year six independent associations had been established at Dudley, Stourbridge, Coventry, Worcester, Wolverhampton, and Stafford, in which 2,108 members had subscribed for 2,837 shares, and in Birmingham alone the

subscriptions amounted to 500*l.* per month. At the close of the second year a meeting was held at Birmingham, in order to organize a plan for general union. Delegates were present from London, Coventry, Leeds, Wolverhampton, Doncaster, Wrexham, Barnsley, Darlington, Halifax, Huddersfield, Gloucester, Bradford, Stourbridge, and Derby. In Birmingham 15,000*l.* had been subscribed, with which four estates had been purchased by 1,800 subscribers. In Derby 1,000 shares had been subscribed for by 700 individuals. In Leicester, though the society was only three months old, there were 400 subscribers for as many shares. In Wolverhampton they had 750 members, and had purchased two estates at the cost of 10,780*l.* In Stourbridge, with a population of only 8,000, the society had 250 members. In October, 1850, there were 80 societies in operation, with numerous branches, and a total sum of 170,000*l.* had been subscribed for 30,000 shares, the value of which, when fully paid up, amounted to 1,000,000*l.* In 1849 the late Mr. Cobden established the National Freehold Land Society, which, with its off-shoot, the British Land Society, have sold land to the amount of 1,246,234*l.*, the number of estates purchased has been 219, of 6,492 acres, with 97,380 allotments, principally in the home counties. In 1859 the total number of societies scattered throughout the country was 2,000, and their total income 2,400,000*l.* a-year, and it is believed that the number has not decreased, and that the total number of members is now 200,000, with paid-up capital of 12,000,000*l.*, of which 8,000,000*l.* has been invested in land, and the rest repaid, with interest, as these societies constitute also a superior class of savings' banks, giving a much higher rate of interest than usual. But it will be easily seen that the above calculation is, probably, very much below the truth.

To illustrate the present working of the movement I will give a few examples: 1st, from the manufacturing districts; 2ndly, from the metropolis. But I must first premise that these societies are to be divided into two main

classes: the Terminating and the Permanent. The former are composed of a certain fixed number of members, who pay up their shares by graduated regular payments; during the progress of these payments certain houses, freehold or leasehold, are bought and balloted for by the shareholders, or certain sums are advanced in the same way, which might be invested in land or houses, at the option of the recipient. When the whole of the shares are completed, a certain sum of money, agreed on at the commencement, is allotted to each shareholder who had not drawn a prize, and the society is dissolved, or is, as it is technically termed, "up." The Permanent have no stated number of members; they join, attain their object, and retire, to have their places filled by others; they either buy land and allot freeholds, or lend money to enable their subscribers to do so for themselves; and they also provide the machinery of a savings' bank, paying high interest, for those who choose merely to invest.

In Birmingham, since 1842, 2,500,000*l.* has been paid by the working men and the lower class of tradesmen; and of the whole number of societies eight had terminated with success, four had become merged in societies now existing, two have been voluntarily wound up without loss, and four only have failed. The sums received are as follows:—

	£
Those which have merged, or terminated successfully	77,858
Failed	13,800
Now existing	2,242,968
	£2,334,626

Besides ten others, of which it was impossible to obtain returns, and which, it is calculated, would swell the total amount to 2,500,000*l.* The number of members now subscribing is 11,193. The amount due on mortgage 539,732*l.*, amount due to investors 438,043*l.* To these figures should be added 60,000*l.* borrowed capital; but this practice, formerly common, is fast decreasing, in consequence of Mr.

Tidd Pratt refusing to certify rules containing borrowing powers. Six of these societies have 1,000 members each, and one 3,000; the others are much smaller.

To show their political influence—not party influence, as they are not, at least most of them, founded for a party object—I may mention that in 1860, 2,000 votes had been placed on the County and 600 on the Borough Register, while, at the present time, it is calculated that from 8,000 to 9,000 working men have obtained freeholds both in town and county.

In Leeds there are several societies. One in particular has been in existence seventeen years; it numbers 6,972 members, whose weekly payments are 3,624*l.* The number of members who attend the societies' offices each Tuesday on business averages from 1,200 to 1,500. The amount advanced to borrowing members has been 749,864*l.* In all no less than 24,589 persons have passed through the society, and the aggregate payments have been 1,200,598*l.*; it has also received in loans 251,261*l.*, and the total from all sources is 1,477,529*l.*

In Liverpool and Birkenhead there are upwards of 100 societies, but mostly small ones.

In Manchester there are 54, and in Sheffield 6.

In Halifax the Permanent Benefit Building Society has been of the greatest service in improving the dwellings of the working classes.

At Wolverhampton there are two Building Societies with 4,799 members; they have purchased 150 acres, and made 1,343 allotments, of which 900 are built over. Their total gross receipts have been 173,989*l.*

At Sunderland there are 57 Building and 1 Land Society. One half the town has been literally built by them.

In the Metropolis there are three great central societies.

The National, mentioned above.

The Conservative Land, established 13 years, has allotted 60 estates, comprising 6,139 allotments. The

total number of shares taken have been 22,925; total receipts, 862,641*l.*; and of which 415,550*l.* has been invested in land.

The Temperance Permanent Benefit Building Society, in 10 years, received 700,000*l.*, and lent 507,000*l.* The present number of shareholders is 44,000, and they are increasing at the rate of 10,000 a-year.

These three are supported by a mixed class of shareholders—the two former buy land in various counties; the latter, I believe, confines its operations to advancing money to its subscribers to enable them to purchase freehold or leasehold tenements.

The principal local societies are as follows:—

The Starr Bowkett Societies, founded by Mr. Starr, of Farringdon Road. These consist of an unlimited number of affiliated societies, each on the terminating principle, with a maximum number of members of 1,200, though few reach that amount. The total number of affiliated societies is 106, and the total number of members 50,000, almost exclusively working men. I gladly here take the opportunity of expressing my admiration for one who, though in a humble station, has by his unwearied exertions done more for the comfort, happiness, and social condition of the working-classes than almost any other person or society, however exalted or however powerful.

The West Metropolitan and Provincial has 3,306 shareholders.

The Tredegar, just started at Bow, numbers already upwards of 1,000. Both of these are mainly supported by working men and the smaller class of tradesmen.

The Lombardian, Commercial Road, has already 2,000 shareholders, and has lent 25,000*l.*

The Church of England has just terminated, after having supplied its 2,000 subscribers with the means of becoming householders—many of a superior class.

The Cavendish, also a terminating society, with 2,000 members, principally tradesmen.

In addition to these I have before me the rules of ten different Terminating building societies, comprising the usual number of members, *i.e.* from 500 to 600, and supported by various classes, besides those of two permanent societies, the numbers of which, as they have only just commenced, cannot of course be given.

The difference which may be observed between the societies in the manufacturing districts and the metropolis is, that while in the latter the societies are mostly permanent and supported almost exclusively by the working classes, in the former almost all the local societies are terminating, and are supported by a more mixed constituency.

It must be observed also, that as the London local societies do not create freeholds by allotment, but confine themselves in a great measure to buying freeholds and leaseholds already built, though many doubtless build for themselves with the money they obtain from the society, comparatively few have as yet become voters by their means, yet that, as most of the houses are situated beyond the borough boundaries, if the county franchise be lowered to 14*l.*, the effect on the counties immediately around London will be very marked.

It is so to a certain extent even now. In Surrey, nearly 400 votes have been created by this means. In West Kent, 300 have been created by the central societies, and an equal number, chiefly in and around Lewisham, by the working-men's societies in Woolwich. Many hundreds of working-men's freeholds are being erected at Plaistow and Stratford, in Essex, and there are of course vast numbers in Middlesex, though it is impossible to tell their total number, as the subscribers buy or build their houses themselves, and it is extremely difficult to ascertain whether the money is their own or borrowed; and if the latter, then from what source. At present, of course, only freeholders come on; but as I said above, if this bill become law, the number will be vastly augmented by the leaseholders. I ought to

mention, that a recent decision of the Court of Common Pleas has greatly facilitated the acquisition of freeholds by members of these societies.*

Hence we see that a silent but very important social revolution is in progress, one that cannot be ignored in any considerations affecting reform. Without including the numerous small societies scattered through the country, or the two great political societies, the National and the Conservative, we see that the building societies are prevalent in the manufacturing districts, *i.e.* Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, East Worcestershire, the West Riding, and Durham; and in the metropolitan district, South Essex, Middlesex, Hertford, East Surrey, and West Kent, comprising twenty-nine county members in the former, and eleven in the latter. They are probably also prevalent in the manufacturing districts of South Wales; but of these I have been able to obtain no information.

We therefore see that,—

1. Working men, and especially those in the manufacturing districts, have a ready means of obtaining the franchise, and are most eager to avail themselves of it.

2. That it is the *élite* who thus acquire it, and thus voters under this system are more independent, more easily registered, and, being permanent residents, are more likely to take an interest in the affairs of the constituency and the choice of a representative.

3. That a far greater number of working men have the franchise, and that they have far greater interest in counties than was supposed.

4. That the true reason for the apathy of the working classes on the subject of Reform, and the small percentage

* The eagerness with which working men join these societies is easily explained. They form the best possible investment for their money. 2*s.* 6*d.* a-week paid to a Building Society for twelve years amounts to 120*l.*; paid to a Savings'-bank, it is only 92*l.* The 92*l.* would be eleven years in reaching 120*l.*; but in the meantime the 120*l.* would have reached 256*l.*

(from 8 to 12 per cent. in the manufacturing districts) is owing to the fact, that all can gain the franchise who care to do so, and that the working men of the North prefer a course which gives them a county than that which gives them a borough vote.

It is possible also that the low rents in the centres of manufacturing boroughs is owing to the disinclination of the working men to inhabit these old and poor houses, and their preference for suburban freeholds.

But their numbers do not end here. Sir R. Knightley's return, 1859, gives the number of borough freeholders at 95,000. Lord Aveland, in 1860, gives it at 98,000, or an increase of over 1,300 per annum. It is estimated that the greater number of these are working men's freeholds, and when to these we add the number of freeholds created by the building societies, and the number of working men 40*s.* freeholders, and all statisticians agree that they must be very considerable in the counties pure, we shall find that the total county constituency to be accredited to the working classes is at least one-fifth of the whole, and that, moreover, it is daily increasing.

I have now I trust proved,—

1. That the argument for Reform, which speaks of the millions of the unenfranchised as a reason for extending the suffrage, is untenable, as in every well-regulated system large masses of the population cannot possess an individual representation.

2. That those generally spoken of as working men, *i.e.* skilled mechanics, the *élite* of the lower orders, have already, taking property, numbers, and the higher but less easily appreciated conditions of social and intellectual qualifications, a sufficient share in the representation.

3. That the lower orders in general are sufficiently represented.

4. That the number of working men on the County Register is much greater than is generally supposed.

5. That working men possess a means of acquiring the

suffrage, a means which is not only of great political but also social importance.

So much, then, for the usual "working class" arguments urged in favour of reform. But admitting the necessity of reform, and some correction of the anomalous system at present existing is certainly required, something which shall provide for the rapid growth of our large towns, which shall remove abuses and correct evils; admitting even that a wise measure, after providing for actual requirements, should be able, without disturbing the equilibrium of the Constitution, to give the working classes a larger share of the representation than they already possess; admitting all this, what manner of Reform should we require?

There are three requisites for a good state of the representation, and consequently for a good measure of reform.

1. That all classes should have a fair share in the representation proportionate to the numbers, wealth, and intelligence. And this must be a representation proportionate, not in mere numbers, but in the distribution of them, *i.e.* in the command of seats.

2. That the constituencies should be such as to return the best representatives with the least trouble, and that they (the constituencies) should be equally free from bribery, the dictation of a clique, or the impulse of a mob.

3. That the franchise should be so contrived as to admit within its pale all those of different classes who may become deserving of it, so that as each class, by the gradual effect of social progress, increases in power, wealth, and intelligence, so its influence on the legislature should progress as rapidly, but as silently and as imperceptibly. But in every well-ordered State, especially an old State, and one forming part of a close community of nations, the lower classes, however powerful they might necessarily, and even advantageously, become, should never be allowed to obtain the supreme power in the State, nor would there, I believe, be ever any danger of their attempting to seize it.

Let us understand this question of the working classes clearly. I am no very enthusiastic admirer, nor a very vehement detractor, of them. I am quite ready to admit their being of the "same flesh and blood;" for I believe that they are "men of like passions with ourselves," and that they only act as every other man would do if similarly situated; and as, to a certain extent, men do act whenever any body of them finds itself with a community of interests somewhat separated from those of the rest of mankind. I do not blame their unions, for it is extremely natural that large bodies of men joined together by a perfect com munity of interests—interests, to a great extent, different from those of others—should act very much in concert; nor do I blame their peculiar rules, which are, perhaps, necessary in their peculiar position; nor their strikes, which are a rough, but effectual mode of advancing and protecting their interests, a proceeding which no one can blame. Nor do I expect, if the present bill should become law—nor, indeed, at any future time—to see Messrs. Potter, Odgers, and Connolly forming a triumvirate; but I do expect that the absolute identity of interests, the vast organization, and the perfect discipline of the working classes, will be felt, and very prejudicially felt, shortly after they have obtained anything like a preponderance in boroughs, and then I should expect a class conflict in earnest. The sentiment that has been talked on this subject is folly; the legislator's duty is calmly to consider the question, and to see whether the Estate of the Commons sufficiently represents the working classes, and if it do not, how best to admit them without injuring the Constitution. The present mode of proceeding is contrary to this, with imperfect statistics, so that we cannot judge of the present proportions of classes; we are hurried on amidst rhapsodies of words, and a bill is endeavoured to be forced upon us which will either destroy the Constitution to make way for a pure democracy, in which case Mr. Lowe's famous, but too epigrammatic, words will come true, or else it will

virtually hand over all the interests and the whole conduct of the complicated affairs of a gigantic empire to a very small minority of mechanics; and all this is to be done when there is no demand for it, and which is actually committing an injustice to all other classes and interests by giving, without a cause, much more than a proportionate weight, considered merely as to numbers, to the working classes.

A statesman would have considered the subject thoroughly. Having obtained the statistics of one half of the constituencies, he would not have omitted to obtain the statistics of the other half, especially when the former had been found to falsify all his calculations; he would have approached the question with a reverent awe, and a frame of mind impressed by so great a task, not with rash flippancy. If he found it necessary to increase the share of the working classes, he would have taken care that in no case should they preponderate; he would have strengthened the position of the other classes; he would have been careful not to introduce new and ill-framed franchises; he would remove all abuses, and while about his great work, he would see whether any anomalies existed, whether in any place the growth of the population or social changes had thrown the Constitution out of gear, and, finally, he would have striven to make the Constitution as strong and permanent as befits that of a great empire.

But I can discern no statesmanship in such a measure as this. A hurried and clumsy production, having for basis the old hack, 10*l.* in counties and 6*l.* in boroughs, just sufficiently glossed over to save appearances, carelessly drawn up, without a thought of the consequences, and without knowledge of the social condition and requirements of the people, it unsettles everything and settles nothing; it aggravates every existing evil and remedies none, while, without one good feature, it adds a few more evils of its own creation, and those of a peculiarly malignant character.

This may seem a sweeping charge. Step by step I shall

examine the bill, and I trust I shall prove that while every clause is faulty, every evil is left unremedied.

First, for counties.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his speech on the first reading, said:—

> "We propose to give a county franchise of 14*l.* occupation, not only of land, but of houses, or houses with land. This will correspond to a rating franchise of 12*l.*, and is calculated to give votes to 171,000 persons. Owners of copyholds and leaseholds in boroughs are to have the same rights in county votes as 40*s.* freeholders. I am not able to state the numerical effect from the absence of materials for that purpose. The increase cannot be large, but it must be good as far as it goes, because it is a representation thoroughly germane to the character of the county constituencies. All adult male depositors in a savings' bank or post-office of 50*l.* for two years, are entitled to be registered for the place in which he resides. This will commonly be a county franchise. It will not add many, because of the trouble and expense of the claim. It will, under the operation of the post-office savings' banks, be a franchise which will have a tendency gradually to extend itself. It (the whole county enfranchisement) will be a middle-class enfranchisement, and will diminish the share of the working classes."

The 14*l.* clause is, as I have said, merely the 10*l.* in disguise, and it will swamp the really county population by the addition of 170,000 new voters, mostly resident in unrepresented towns and the suburbs of the great boroughs. One of the main reasons for giving so large a number of votes to small boroughs is that they represent the unrepresented towns, but if these unrepresented towns vote for the counties, the dominant classes in small boroughs will have a double representation, one direct through the county member, one indirect through the neighbouring borough member. Moreover, if these voters are added to the county constituency, the argument in favour of a greatly increased county representation becomes irresistible.

The hardship inflicted on, I had almost said, the animus displayed against the counties, becomes more apparent when we see that no means is taken of enlarging the borough boundaries, and that in the "grouping" no one

large unenfranchised town has been "grouped." Redruth and Camborne are not grouped with St. Ives or Truro, though they have a population of 13,000. Penzance is not grouped with Helston, though it is only six miles from it, or with Falmouth, though only seven miles distant. Within ten miles of the three little Dart boroughs lie Brixham, Paignton, Torquay, and Newton, with a total population of upwards of 30,000, which is rapidly increasing. Gosport, with 7,000, is not grouped with Portsmouth; nor Croydon, with 20,000, with Reigate; nor Ware, 5,000, with Hertford, though the boundary of the latter borough actually touches the outskirts of the town; nor Leamington, with a rapidly increasing population of 17,000, with Warwick, though but half-a-mile from the boundary of the latter. The cases of this kind in the North are too numerous to mention at present. The injustice of this proceeding is twofold; while the counties are swamped by a different class of voters, the towns themselves obtain a very much less, and in all respects more unsatisfactory representation than if they were joined to the neighbouring boroughs.

Next take the Leasehold Clause. With what object this was introduced is to me a mystery, or what good purpose it was intended to serve: but as it is there, let us consider it. "It must be good because it is thoroughly germane to the County Constituency."

The original representation of the people was of two kinds — the corporations or guilds, and freemen representing trades, and the freeholders who represented the general mass of the people. Almost the whole of the borough representation was in the hands of various privileged classes, who had been created at different times and for different reasons, and the small size of the boroughs, and the, even for them, small number of electors did not admit of any great number of borough freeholders, who in any case were identical in character and interests with the bulk of the freeholders of the country. But now that an occupation franchise has taken the place of the old borough rights,

there can be no reason why the borough freeholders should interfere in county elections. This intrusion of the borough freeholders has long been felt as a grievance, but, as if it were not sufficient, the leaseholders are added. There *is* a practical reason for not transferring the borough freeholders to the boroughs, namely, the number of occupiers already possessed of borough votes who would oppose it, but there is none for increasing them by the leaseholders, which nobody has desired. It is strange logic which proves the goodness of a *new* county franchise *because* it is germane to what is universally acknowledged to be the worst part of the *old*.

What will be their numbers? In North Warwick they will be 5,000, in Middlesex 3,000, and not to make an undue parade of figures, in West Kent, East Surrey, and Hertford a proportionate number. These figures I have obtained by means of a very careful analysis made by those most conversant with such matters. Taking an average as near as we can, the total result will be 30,000; yet the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a statement such as, it is to be hoped, was never yet heard in the House, said he would call them and the savings'-bank voters 24,000, to make up a round number!

Next we come to the Savings'-Bank Franchise. The number of investors of 50*l.* for two years is 87,000, and it is certainly a franchise which "will extend itself." The main objection to it is, that while it is a franchise of a class totally unknown to the constitution, it would afford the greatest facilities for creating votes both in borough and county, either by wholly or partly qualifying the voter, an investment which would pay as well as the funds and keep the voter entirely in the manufacturer's power. As a Savings'-Bank is not a remarkably good investment, most people who could do so would invest their savings in a building society, in a trade, or in some other way by which they might advance their prospects, it is obvious, therefore, that it is as a rule only the humblest and most dependent class who so deposit their money. Hence, disregarding the

superior franchise created by the building societies, the Ministry have proposed a new and strange franchise, faulty in its principle, and altogether unnecessary. Again, why should so few qualify under this franchise? Two-thirds of the 10*l.*'s qualify under all the disadvantage of change of residence, non-payment of rates, and proof of occupation. The Savings'-Bank is the easiest of proof, and no deductions can be made from the first two causes, which are the main reason why two-thirds only of the 10*l.* occupiers are on the register.

To sum up, we have at present a County Constituency of 542,000, deduct 100,000 borough freeholders, the building societies' freeholds, and 50*l.* leaseholders in surburban districts, add to these 30,000 leaseholders, and an unknown number for the urban voters created by the new 14*l.* clause, and we find that the town completely neutralize the agricultural electors, besides possessing the whole of the borough members who are returned by their brethren within the borough boundary; so that the agricultural interest will be almost literally unrepresented in the House of Commons. Let no one accuse me of exaggeration. Every one knows the silent but powerful influence which constituents can bring to bear on their representatives, and who can doubt that in any case in which the interests of the two sections even *appear* to clash, the urban portion of constituency, infinitely more active, infinitely better able to communicate with each other, and far better versed in the arts of political agitation, will carry the day.

But the county constituencies are not merely the peculiar means of representing the agricultural interest, they are the strongholds of the higher, middle, and upper classes, the means for checking the excitement and ferment inseparable from congregated masses; they are the nurseries by whose representation the gentry and nobility, the great landed proprietors, are trained to the duties of public life, and by means of which, issuing as it were into the field of the House of Commons, the junior members of the peerage are

enabled to fight the battle of their order in open field, an order which perhaps would not long survive if closely besieged within the walls of its own House. What will this bill do? It will swamp the county constituencies with all the benefits I have enumerated; it will hand them over to the same classes who have now the preponderance in boroughs, those very classes whose corruption it is so much the fashion to deplore, and whose vices it is proposed to wash away with an inundation of uncorrupted and incorruptible 7*l.*'s. While as if to compensate for this injury, and as if there were not already sufficient means of creating sham freeholds, additional facilities are to be given for creating fictitious votes by the savings'-bank clause, probably in order to enable a manufacturing millionaire ambitious of a county seat to contend on equal terms with the county magnate.

It must not be forgotten that the assertion of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that of the enlargement of the constituencies both in boroughs and counties, one-half is a middle-class, and one-half a working-class enfranchisement, thereby seeming to imply that the one balances the other, is an argument too obviously fallacious to deserve notice. The middle class enfranchisement affects only the counties, and makes no difference to the obviously unfair arrangement by which the majority of borough seats are or shortly will be handed over to the working-classes. But it *does* do this. While the boroughs are handed over from the middle to the working classes, the former are compensated by having the counties transferred to them after being taken from the upper and higher middle classes, so that by this Reform Bill the whole character of the constituency is doubly lowered. It is the old story, the Huns drove out the Goths, the Goths invaded the provinces, and the sum total was the ruin of the Roman Empire.

Next we come to the boroughs. To attack the Government bill after the masterly criticism of Mr. Baxter would indeed be, to use the emphatic words of Sophocles, "to kill

a dead man, to fight the shadow of smoke, a mere phantom." But I will advert to one or two points only which he has omitted.*

No data exist as to the probable number who will be enfranchised by the abolition of the rating clause and the admission of the compound householders. The Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that the whole number of compound householders amounts to 60,000, almost all in the metropolis; but as in the same speech he stated that the number in Liverpool alone amounted to 6,000 or 7,000, I do not think he should have stated the total number that would be enfranchised by these clauses so low as 55,000. It has also been stated on the highest authority that the compounders in London alone are 75,000 exclusive of the county, of whom 15,000 only are registered. The statistics of these new franchises are so vague that it is impossible to estimate them accurately, and one number will do quite as well as another; but I think we may assume the Ministry to have greatly underrated their number.

With regard to the lodger franchise, I am enabled to speak with somewhat more accuracy, or at least with more comparative accuracy, having taken some pains to investigate this obscure subject.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer gave 60,000 as the total number who would be enfranchised by this clause. For any data that exist, he might just as well have placed it at 6 or 600,000.

In London the majority of rents even for a single unfurnished room are already 4*s.* 6*d.* a-week, the sum required to make up 10*l.* a-year with rates and taxes. (*See* Electoral

* In his statistics of the number of *borough* members who will be chosen by the working classes, Mr. Baxter, of course, took no notice of counties, but it must not be forgotten that the manufacturing counties will be totally in the hands of the working classes and those who have most affinity with them. So that the additional members given to the manufacturing counties, and which are supposed to compensate the agricultural population, really increase the preponderance of artisans.

Returns—detailed return of the borough of Salford.) And all accounts represent them as rising with unprecedented rapidity.

The following are some of the returns I have collected. The lodgings in all cases are unfurnished:—

THE METROPOLIS:

St. James, Westminster.—Average rents paid by working men, from 5*s.* to 8*s.* a-week.

St. Peter's, Windmill Street.—Rent paid by poor families averages 4*s.* 9*d.*

The following is a return, *in extenso*, obtained by the Bible-woman in this parish:—

	s.	*d.*
Great Windmill Street:		
2 rooms, 1st floor (shoemaker)	9	0
2 rooms, 2nd floor (tailor)	8	0
2 rooms, 3rd floor	7	6
Kitchen	4	6
Denman Street:		
2 rooms, 1st floor	10	6
2 rooms, 2nd floor	8	6
1 room, 3rd floor	4	6
Back room, 3rd floor	3	6
3 rooms, 3rd floor	9	0
Front room, 2nd floor	6	0
Back room, second floor	4	0
Wellington Mews:		
Back parlour	4	0
1 room, 1st floor (tailor)	6	0
Back room, 1st floor (tailor)	5	0
2 small back rooms, 2nd floor (postman)	5	0
Crown Court:		
1 room, 3rd floor	4	0
2 rooms, 1st floor	6	6
Rupert Street:		
1st floor	7	6
2nd floor	7	0
3rd floor	5	0

Archer Street:	*s.*	*d.*
2 small rooms	5	0
Attic	4	0

Bow Street and its Neighbourhood.—Rent of two rooms from 7*s.* to 9*s.* a-week. All the rents are rising very fast, and no single room can now be had for 4*s.*

The Brill, Somers Town.—Lowest rent for one best room, 4*s.*; lowest for two rooms, 5*s.* The people here are of the very lowest class—costermongers, street-singers, &c., and even here the rents are rapidly rising. In Bloomsbury the rents are somewhat higher.

Chelsea.—From 3*s.* to 5*s.* a-week. At Brompton it is much the same. The houses are usually taken by mechanics, who pay from 20*l.* to 30*l.* a-year, and who make a profit by sub-letting the rooms. The lodgers are usually of a very low and illiterate class.

In Plaistow the dock labourers pay from 2*s.* to 2*s.* 6*d.* a-week for the privilege of sleeping eight in a room, twelve feet square. Here, again, the houses are taken by the better and more permanent class of dock labourers, who make a considerable profit by sub-letting to these men. They will pay as much as 30*l.* a-year for a 10*l.* house, and the sub-letting of one room amply repays them.

Leeds.—Average rents paid by working men, 2*s.* 9*d.*

Manchester.—Ordinary skilled workmen from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 5*s.* Superior mechanics pay more.

Liverpool.—Average rents from 3*s.* to 5*s.*

Plymouth.—Average rent paid by working men, 2*s.* 6*d.* to 3*s.*

Totness.—Ten persons could qualify under this clause, all of them of the superior middle classes.

From this it appears that an indefinite number of working men may come on in the metropolis, and a large number in the manufacturing districts, while in the other towns only the middle classes could attain the franchise by this means. It is a mistake to suppose that lodgers are continually fluctuating, large numbers live for years in the

same rooms. But what security have we against fraud in this matter? how can we tell what rent a man pays, or how long he has paid it, when there is no rate-book to check him? Again, what is the legal definition of a lodger, how long in a year must he reside? may he break his occupation? In some places attendance is included even in the rent paid by working men; this attendance would invariably be included in rent; but even if it were discovered, how could you prove its value? This is only one of the many legal difficulties that stand in the way of the lodger franchise. Lastly, the clause would, in all probability, lead to a great deal of tyranny and oppression by placing power in the hands of landlords very little qualified to use it, and who, in the present dearth of lodgings, would have very little difficulty either in raising the rents or compelling a tenant to yield under threat of ejectment.

The great difficulty in large boroughs is to obtain a correct register, and, owing to the impossibility of overseers being able to obtain a correct list of those who ought or who ought not to be on the register, thousands are annually deprived of the franchise who should be in possession of it. These persons usually belong to the better class of voters, who, without organization or the means of co-operation, remain, however numerous, as mere units, incapable for the most part of combining in defence of their rights. Hence, every election finds them deprived of numbers sufficient to have turned the scale, and victory remains with the minority; an inferior class of voters, who yet possess a natural organization which enables them to keep every man on the register, and to poll their whole strength when on. Any measure which would largely increase the number of electors in large towns would greatly aggravate this evil, and any clause which would complete the difficulties of registration by adding lodgers and compound householders would place the entire large borough constituencies at the mercy either of a kind of busybodies or obscure local politicians, or the elections would be carried by the

excitement of a mob constituency and the mere impulse of the moment.

Nor must it be forgotten that the rapid rise in rents and the still more rapid rise in lodgings enables many artisans to take a comparatively expensive house in order to make a profit by letting to lodgers, so that not only are large numbers of working men enabled to come on the register, but they would be also able to be followed to the poll by from two to three votes a-piece. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that few artisans pay more than one-sixth of their income in rent. But this would only give 27*s.* weekly wages. In practice, many artisans pay one-third, and make a profit on it. The member for Brighton (Mr. Fawcett) in his speech on the first reading said, that there was by no means that unity among working men which was generally supposed, some belonged to trades' unions, many abhorred them. The Chancellor of the Exchequer repeatedly urged his belief that large numbers of working men, who might be entitled to a vote, would not claim.

The two together form a strong argument against the bill. Numbers of the independent working men would not claim a vote, while we may be certain that every man under the influence of an organized body, not to say trades' union, would be placed on the register, and their lodgers with them, and any deficiency that still remained would be supplemented by the fictitious votes for which provision is so kindly made. The independent artisan would be overridden both in his trade and in parliament by his organized fellow-workmen, and the last state of that man would certainly be worse than the first.

Therefore we see—

That the county constituencies already inundated by town voters, instead of being relieved of them, as could easily be done, are to be supplemented by a great and causeless addition of town voters, so that not only will the counties proper be completely overwhelmed, but the power will be taken from the high-class county voters, and

transferred to the lower, those who already rule in boroughs.

That in the boroughs the present middle-class voters will inevitably be in a short time completely swamped by the working classes.

That in both counties and boroughs a new franchise is introduced of a character unknown to the Constitution, and which gives the greatest facilities for creating votes, for which too great facilities exist already.

That in the boroughs two new and vicious franchises will be created, the effect of which will be totally to disorganize them, which will open the door to great frauds and much oppression, and which will hand over the large boroughs to the dictation of a clique or the impulse of a mob.

That, owing to no detailed returns having been furnished for the counties, we are ignorant of the precise number of working men at present voting in them; but that if these returns were given, it would in all probability be found that the proportion in counties would be equal to that in boroughs.

That till this is made clear, we cannot estimate with accuracy the increased share in the franchise which should be given to working men, or, indeed, whether they should have any increase at all.

That on the old constitutional principle that the Commons are a body chosen in the best manner to represent all classes, and to return members for those classes, there is no reason for introducing new and faulty franchise on the ground that certain persons *ought* to have the franchise, whereas the interests of these persons are identical with and represented by others of the same class, who obtain the franchise in a different and less practically faulty manner.

Finally, that there is no ground for these dangerous innovations either because the present system returns an inferior class of men to Parliament, or that the working-class interests are not sufficiently taken care of, or because,

as a matter of abstract right, they have not a sufficient share in the franchise, or because of any present or future danger to be apprehended. But that there are great and acknowledged evils in the present system which are not redressed by the scheme under consideration, which does nothing but aggravate existing evils, and add a few new ones of its own creation.

Where not only the statistics are so vague, as is the case with the compound householders, savings'-bank voters, lodgers, and men who do not pay rates, but when it is difficult to know how many belong to the working class proper, it is almost impossible to calculate with anything like accuracy the effect of the present bill. But taking the Chancellor of the Exchequer's own calculations, and adding 10,000 for savings'-bank voters in boroughs, we have :—

Present Constituency.

Working men	126,000
Non-working	362,000
	488,000

Future Constituency.

Working men now on	126,000
Working men between 7*l.* and 10*l.*	150,000
Lodgers	60,000
Compound householders, and by abolition of rate-paying say	55,000
Savings'-bank voters	10,000
	401,000
Non-working men	362,000
	39,000

I have neither the same horror nor the same admiration for working men which some seem to have, but I *have* a horror of entrusting the destinies of the country to the lowest class of voters; and every one of these new voters will belong to that lowest class, except a small body of lodgers too small to be of any avail. The present bill, then, *must* hand over the representation to the democracy,

whether skilled mechanics, the smallest tradesmen, or day labourers; and I have proved already that no real counterpoise can be expected from the counties, as asserted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

THE REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS.

The Government plan is faulty, first, because it takes an arbitrary line not consonant with any marked division of the boroughs, nor agreeing with the number of electors or the value of property, and thereby operates unjustly.

Secondly—From the great practical inconveniences which will result from the distance between the members of a group.

Thirdly—From the evil that will arise in many cases from connecting two or more boroughs of dissimilar, perhaps even discordant interests, and without connection with one another.

Fourthly—Because that perfect harmony, that close connection, that identity of interest, which ought always to exist between a member and his constituents, can have no place where one man sits for two or three unconnected boroughs of different, and perhaps antagonistic interests.

Lastly—Because the present plan will not alleviate, but will aggravate the evils of inadequate representation and apparent anomalies, which are now so much complained of.

There are seventeen large boroughs, having only one member, omitting Salford :—

	Population. Census 1861.	Voters.	G. E. R.
Ashton	33,917	967	£105,590
Bury	37,563	1,352	131,595
Birkenhead	51,649	4,563	299,224
Cardiff	35,541	2,072	188,417
Chatham	36,177	2,104	79,152
Cheltenham	39,693	2,793	230,939
Dudley	44,975	1,358	142,191
Gateshead	33,587	1,165	118,594

	Population. Census 1861.	Voters.	G. E. R.
Huddersfield .	34,877	2,138	£171,795
Merthyr . .	83,875	1,387	371,742
South Shields .	35,239	1,113	110,368
Rochdale . .	38,184	1,358	141,244
Swansea . .	57,488	1,967	193,743
Tynemouth . .	34,021	1,271	105,848
Wakefield . .	23,150	1,086	85,149
Walsall . .	37,760	1,296	116,787
Warrington .	26,947	1,768	86,741

But the real population, *i. e.* including the suburbs, is much larger.

To these towns will now be added seven more, and the anomaly will still remain of large and rapidly-increasing boroughs with only a single member, while small and decaying towns, not one quarter of their wealth and population, will have two, because they happened to be just over the magical line of 8,000. Then the grouped boroughs, some of which now possess two representatives, will feel it a great hardship that they should be merged, while others with a very few hundreds more of population should continue their two members. But there is another anomaly; some of these small boroughs are to retain their two members because they cannot be "grouped." Now the boundaries of Great Marlow and Wycombe are contiguous for miles, but they cannot be joined within one boundary, which would be better than grouping, because Wycombe happens to be just over the required 8,000. The anomaly will still remain, of some small boroughs retaining their two members, entirely owing to their geographical position, though they may be near enough to some a little over the line, while others much superior to them in every way are merged in a system with the other members, of which they have no sympathy, merely because they happen to be within a few, sometimes even within many, miles of each other. Again, some small boroughs are left independent, others are merged. Lastly, if we look down the returns, we shall see that many boroughs grouped have more voters, have a larger gross estimated rental, and are more prosperous, and are advancing more rapidly than others which are left inact. Lastly, the great and acknowledged evil in our representation is the anomaly of a large borough returning one representative, while a small borough returns two. This may be unavoidable; but what is the use of going out of the way to increase the evils by creating a number of grouped constituencies returning one member with a larger population and more electors than other boroughs returning two? Men endure an anomaly under which they were born, but they resent, and rightly so, as an injury and an injustice one which is forced upon them. And all this is done at the very time when the number of large boroughs with one member is being considerably augmented, and only in one instance (Salford) diminished.

The present bill, then, is wrong in principle, because it creates an objectionable class of constituency.

It is unjust, because it goes on the principle of population only, which is too narrow.

It is impolitic, because it aggravates existing anomalies instead of removing them.

What, then, is the cause of this failure? It is owing to the Chancellor of the Exchequer having drawn a narrow, invisible, and arbitrary line at 8,000, instead of a plain, broad, and natural one at 10,000. By doing this, not only did he act unjustly by condemning some boroughs and saving others on the ground of population, when voters and property would have turned the scale; but, finding he had not enough seats at his disposal, he was forced to resort to the more objectionable system of grouping, and, like a second Mezentius, joined divergent and repugnant bodies into a forced and unnatural union.

A few more words on some of the minor details of this scheme. Why is Gravesend, with 20,000, presented with a member, when Croydon and its environs, with 30,000, and which are increasing with five times the rapidity, are passed over? Why, too, is Glossop omitted, with its

population of 20,000? Why is North Derbyshire presented with a member, which is denied to the southern division, with a far greater population and far more electors? Then why add to the Metropolitan constituencies? Westminster, with the exception of Southwark, is the smallest of them; it already extends to the centre of the High Street, Kensington, and if the latter place and Chelsea, which are divided from it by no marked boundary, were added to it, the augmentation would not much exceed 130,000, not much more than any fair rectification of the borough boundary would add to Lambeth. Why divide the Tower Hamlets, especially if Stratford and Plaistow are not to be added to them? The Metropolitan constituencies are so anomalous, the evils inseparable from them are so great, that they cannot be subjected to the same rule as others, and their vast extent furnishes no argument for their subdivision. Why should Arundel be grouped, a borough which, small as it is, represents indirectly the most numerous constituency in the kingdom, one which without it would be practically disfranchised—I mean the English Roman Catholics. Lastly, why give a member to the University of London, with a constituency of only 1,700? No parallel can be drawn between it and the older universities, whose composition is essentially different. The one is a mere examining body, whose members have little further bond of union beyond having passed a common examination; the others, besides being the main nursery of the Church, possess vast corporate property, exceeding the gross estimated rental of most boroughs, a large body of residents, alone exceeding the number of electors in many boroughs, and a great constituency, united together by residence and a hundred associations, by far closer ties than the mere degrees conferred by the examining body at Burlington House. And they exercise incomparably greater influence in the country.

I have now examined the principles on which I believe Reform should be conducted, and by them I have criticized

the Ministerial Reform Bill. I regret that in that criticism I should have found so much to condemn and so little to praise; but as I do not wish to destroy without building, or to condemn the work of others without offering something of my own, I will venture, with the greatest diffidence, to lay before the reader some suggestions which I believe would tend to a satisfactory settlement of the question.

The representative portion of the British Constitution has a twofold object—first, the representation of the mass of the people; and secondly, to afford a means by which the learning, the genius, and the virtue of the nation, unconnected with any trade, lords of no broad acres or vast manufactories, without individual interests to serve, may enter Parliament to direct her councils and provide for her welfare. The first of these is provided for by the counties and large boroughs; the latter by the small. Again, England must never be considered as standing alone; she is not merely the United Kingdom, she is the head of a mighty empire, and it is by means of these small boroughs that the interests of the outlying portions of the empire are to be protected. Men conversant with these interests are necessarily unconnected with land or the centres of home industry; we can only, therefore, expect their presence in the House through the portals of the small boroughs. An abuse of this principle brought in the vast East India interest of the preceding century, but its moderate use might have spared us the darkest page of our history, and have left America, if not now a dependent, at least a friend closer than the closest of allies. The prosperity of the West Indies did not long survive the fall of the pocket boroughs. Justice Haliburton, the ablest if not the only authority on Canada, sat for a pocket borough; and at this very moment two of the greatest living authorities on Australia sit for comparatively small, and one for a close constituency. Though we may, indeed, reduce their numbers, or rather the number of their representatives, we must beware lest we diminish them unduly, provoked thereto

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by seeming anomalies and the declamation of political sciolists, or we may at last find that we have handed over the representation, not only of the United Kingdom, but of the British Empire, to an oligarchy, and that an oligarchy of a class unknown to history, and unimagined by philosophers, the artisans aided by the rabble of large towns.

What, then, is the Reform I am about to suggest? All Reform at the present time, to be wise and equitable, must be based on a readjustment of the borough boundaries, for till this is done we shall not know what are the respective claims of boroughs and counties, nor even how to proceed in the redistribution of seats, so close are the unrepresented towns in the manufacturing districts to those which are already boroughs. This being done, we may reduce the borough franchise to 8*l.*, and the county to 20*l.*, avoiding all new franchises as productive only of evil, which will admit a reasonable addition of the working-classes in boroughs, and one which will give them a perfectly fair share of the representation, and one with which they may well be satisfied. It will also give the franchise a solid foundation to rest upon, the line which divides the rating in boroughs and the jury qualification in counties. The borough freeholders should vote in boroughs, or, if this be thought too sweeping a measure, provision might be made, thus gradual extinction of their county rights, and for providing that the new additions to this body vote in boroughs; while, if it be thought necessary for the encouragement of the very valuable building societies, provision might be made that a freehold house or long leasehold should give a vote at a lower rent than a house taken on a short lease or from year to year. And in truth such a house represents not only a far greater value of property but greater habits of self-denial and frugality.

Then, after a thorough revision of the borough boundaries to relieve the counties, we may proceed to the redistribution of seats.

I have spoken above of the 8,000 population as an

arbitrary, and a 10,000 as a natural line. Those who examine carefully the electoral statistics, or better still, are conversant with the boroughs themselves, will know that all the stationary and decaying boroughs are below 10,000, or at least very slightly above it, and that there is a wide difference in the vigour, activity, progress, and increase of all boroughs at or below this line, and those a very little above; why this should be so, I know not, but at any rate, so it is. These boroughs are seventy-three in number, forty-two with two members, and thirty-one with one. I should propose to deprive all those with two of one member each, which would give forty-two seats, a less disfranchisement than that proposed by the present Bill; but if this should not be deemed sufficient, I may mention that Wareham joins Poole, Cirencester almost touches Stroud, Christchurch is close to Lymington, Bridgnorth adjoins Wenlock, Winchelsea is only three miles from Hastings; I speak in each case of the boundaries; Malmsbury adjoins Cricklade, Chippenham, Calne, and Wilton almost surrounds the little area of its more populous neighbour Salisbury; Horsham is wholly included in Shoreham, and this would give nine more seats if by a slight alteration of the boundaries in each case the less were merged in the greater. Nor do I quite see why Rutland should have two members, or why the Isle of Wight should have any at all. At any rate, without insisting on every detail, we have an ample number of seats at our disposal. These should be divided in the proportion of about one-half to the manufacturing districts, and one-half to the counties. What would be the exact proportion, or what number of new boroughs would have to be created, it is impossible to say, until the borough boundaries are settled, as many important new towns might be included in existing boroughs. I think this should be carried as far as possible, in order to allow of two members being given to each, and those large boroughs which have now only one member being raised to two. One member would be given to Gravesend and

one to Croydon. Penzance, Camborne, and Redruth might find a group in Cornwall, and Torquay, Brixham, and Newton in Devon, while Leamington, with its 17,000 inhabitants, could easily be joined to Warwick, from whose boundary it is distant only half-a-mile.

At the same time, until the counties were cleared of their town population, we should not know whether the additional representatives should be given to the manufacturing and metropolitan or to the agricultural counties. We should then have the representation placed on as secure a basis as the franchise. There would be seventy-three small boroughs returning seventy-three members (instead of 115 as now), thirty-six intermediate boroughs, between 11,000 and 20,000, returning fifty-seven members; thirty large boroughs returning fifty-eight members; two only, Chatham and Cheltenham, returning one; eighteen for the metropolis, including Greenwich; the remainder would be divided among the manufacturing districts of South Wales and the North, while the counties would have 189 or 190 instead of 164 members. We should then have a fair representation of the community: the population would be represented, the agricultural by the counties, the manufactures by the boroughs in the North and in South Wales; commerce and other interests, including the ordinary shopkeeping, by the remaining boroughs both large and small, the latter of whom would in addition represent indirectly the small unrepresented towns, and this circumstance, aided by their other advantages, would account for the apparently undue number of representatives given to them. The metropolis is unhappily an anomaly that defies correction.

Look at it in another light. The counties would form the constituency of the highest class, the manufacturing towns would, I think, mostly be ruled by workmen, the other large towns by the tradesmen, the ordinary 10*l.*'s the small boroughs (and in these the workmen, even if large numbers be on the register, are principally dependent on the upper classes in the borough), which would serve, besides

representing their own class, the excellent uses which I have endeavoured to point out. I think this would prove a settlement which there would be no need and little hope of disturbing; and I think also that if anyone were to make the calculation, he would find that the number of the representatives pretty fairly corresponded to the proportion of rental, population, and voters.

And here let me examine shortly the alleged injustice of the county representation.

It is quite true that

The population of counties in 1861 was .	11,427,000
„ boroughs „ .	8,638,000
The electors in counties „ were .	542,000
„ „ „ .	489,000
While the members were for counties in 1861	162
„ boroughs „	334

But this anomaly, startling as it appears, is much modified on close inspection. In the first place, Shoreham and East Retford may be considered counties, this alters the numbers to 166 and 330; thus the population of unrepresented places of 5,000 and upwards is 1,300,000, they are of course indirectly represented by the boroughs. Again, the population of the outskirts of London, in Essex, Middlesex, Kent, and Surrey, are 350,000, they cannot be less in the North, without including those towns which, though new boroughs, may be considered independent of them. Transfer this 2,000,000 from one side to the other, and it may be considerably more, and we have 9,427,000 in the counties, and 10,638,000 in the boroughs. Again, take the 100,000 borough freeholders, the building freeholds, and 50*l.* leaseholds in the suburbs of the North, together probably not less than 40,000, and you have 400,000 county electors to 629,000 borough electors. The difference in annual value, though not easily ascertainable, would also be considerable. When therefore we consider the influence that the agricultural districts have in many boroughs through the inclosure of large districts within the boundary, we may say, that if the

boundaries of the large boroughs were rectified, and twenty-five seats transferred from boroughs to counties, the latter would have little cause left for complaint. The proportion would then be—

	Population.	Electors.	Members.
Counties .	9,427,000	400,000	191 (Counting Shoreham and East Retford.)
Boroughs .	10,638,000	629,000	309

Deduct seventy-three small boroughs, which serve other purposes besides the mere representation of population, and we have 191 to 236, a very fair proportion between the agricultural and urban populations.

I will say one word on the subject of the county representation. The principle of an undivided borough is intelligible enough; it is, or ought to be, a municipal body, the members of which are very closely connected with one another, and it cannot, however large, well be divided without breaking it up into mere slabs of population without more cohesion than the metropolitan constituencies. It is different with the counties; in their gradations of rank, they possess a natural organization of their own; individuals there cannot be units. The county divisions date no higher than the Reform Bill, and need not stand in the way of improvement. Let, then, each county be divided into as many divisions as it has members, with one to each. Perhaps the old territorial division of hundreds would serve as a basis. The result would not only then be a closer connection between members and their constituencies, but young men of leisure would be enabled to enter parliament and devote themselves to it. A class of trained politicians would thus arise, "nurseries of statesmen" would be formed less open to obvious objection than the pocket boroughs, and great strength would be added to the constitutional party by a means that no one could presume to cavil at. I propose this change with great diffidence, never yet having seen even an approach to it hinted; but I would suggest that it is at least worthy the consideration of abler and more experienced heads than my own.

I have now concluded. To the utmost of my humble abilities, I have endeavoured to show, in a strong and clear light, the dangerous tendencies of this uncalled-for measure, which is only really desired by those who declare openly that they seek it only to use as a lever with which to overturn the Constitution, so that in the words of Mr. Pitt, "You are asked to give what nobody demands, and to those who declare that if it is given they will not even then be satisfied."

UNREPRESENTED LARGE TOWNS.

	Census 1851.	Census 1861.	
Bedfordshire:			
Luton . .	10,648	15,329	
Cambridge:			
Ely . . .	6,176	7,428	
Wisbeach . .	10,594	9,276	
Cheshire:			
Runcorn . .	8,049	10,434	
Crewe . .	4,491	8,159	
Congleton . .	10,520	12,344	
Cornwall:			
Penzance . .	9,214	9,414	
Redruth . .	7,095	7,919	
Camborne . .	6,547	7,208	
Devon:			
Newton . .	3,147	5,221	All these towns are within 8 miles of the Dart boroughs.
Torquay . .	7,903	16,419	
Brixham . .	5,627	4,390	
Paignton . .	*—	2,628	
Derby:			
Glossop . .	17,454	1,912	In the extreme north, 6 miles from Staleybridge.
Chesterfield .	7,101	9,836	
Belper . .	10,082	9,509	
Durham:			
Hartlepool, E. &W.	9,503	24,848	
Stockton . .	1,867	13,357	
Darlington .	11,228	15,781	

* A blank space shows that the town was not separately shown in the census abstract of 1851.

	Census 1851.	Census 1861.	
Hampshire:			
Gosport	7,414	7,789	
Kent:			
Gravesend	16,633	18,782	6 miles from Rochester.
Tunbridge Wells	10,587	13,807	
Ramsgate & Margate	11,838	20,739	
Sheerness	8,549	12,015	
Lancashire:			
Burnley	—	28,700	3 miles from Clitheroe. *N.B.* — The borough boundary is always meant.
Southport	4,765	8,940	Stands by itself.
Middleton	5,740	9,876	Half-a-mile from Oldham
Over Darwen	7,020	14,327	
Staleybridge	20,760	24,921	On the outskirts of Ashton
Todmorden	4,532	11,797	
Bacup	—	10,937	
Heywood	12,194	12,824	Half-way between Bury and Rochdale, 2 miles from each.
Farnworth	—	8,720	Close to Bolton.
St. Helen's	14,866	18,396	Stands by itself.
Chorley	8,907	15,013	Stands by itself.
Accrington	7,481	13,872	4 miles from Burnley and Blackburn.
Leicester:			
Loughborough	10,900	10,830	
Lincoln:			
Louth	10,467	10,560	
Spalding	7,627	7,032	
Middlesex:			
Hounslow & Brentfd.	12,384	13,281	
Notts:			
Mansfield	10,012	8,346	
Somerset:			
Yeovil	—	7,957	
Stafford:			
Burton	7,934	13,671	
Wednesbury	11,914	15,298	Close to Walsall, Wolverhampton, and Dudley.
W. Bromwich	—	17,024	
Leek	8,877	10,045	Stands alone.

	Census 1851.	Census 1861.	
Suffolk:			
Lowestoft	6,580	10,663	
Surrey:			
Croydon	10,260	20,325	
Kingston	6,279	9,790	
Richmond	9,065	7,423	
Warwick:			
Leamington	15,692	17,958	Half-a-mile from Warwick
Wilts:			
Trowbridge	10,157	9,626	2 miles from Westbury.
Worcester:			
Stourbridge	7,847	8,166	Close to Dudley.
Oldbury	15,114	15,615	
Yorkshire:			
Rotherham	6,325	7,598	1 mile from Sheffield.
Barnsley	13,437	17,890	Stands alone.
Dewsbury	14,049	18,148	Stand with many smaller towns in a square between Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, and Wakefield.
Heckmondwike	—	8,680	
Doncaster	12,652	16,406	Stands alone.
Keighley	13,050	15,005	6 miles north of Bradford
Middlesboro'	—	18,992	Stands alone; but might be joined in one district with Stockton.
Monmouth:			
Tredegar	8,305	9,383	

In many schemes which have appeared in the newspapers it has been proposed to group numerous unrepresented county towns with those small boroughs which already return members. I do not see how one system of grouping is less objectionable than another. The above list comprises all the really important unrepresented towns, and by it we may see that after enlarging the boundaries of some existing boroughs to include neighbouring towns which are more probably suburbs, and collecting others, not *grouping* them, within one boundary, so as to include masses of population of similar character, after the precedent of Stoke, very few towns would be left unrepresented. A few of these, such as Gravesend and Hartlepool, which are isolated, would have members given them, the rest would not be above 10,000 population, and are mostly stationary, and even decaying.

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